

## CLAIMS

1. A method of softening water, wherein hard water is  
5 contacted with a container and containing one or more  
water-softening agents able to bind calcium ions, the  
container having an enclosing wall wherein at least  
part, preferably all, of the wall is permeable to the  
water and to components dissolved therein  
10 characterised in that the product is stored and  
removed prior to use from packaging having a moisture  
vapour transmission rate of less than  $30\text{g/m}^2/\text{day}$ .
2. A method as claimed in claim 2 wherein at least one  
15 water-softening agent is substantially water-  
insoluble.
3. A method as claimed in claim 1 or 2 wherein the method  
is a method used in a ware washing machine.  
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4. A method as claimed in any claims from 1 to 3 wherein  
at least one water-softening agent is a cation  
exchange resin.
- 25 5. A water-softening product comprising a container  
containing one or more water-softening agents, the  
container having an enclosing wall which in at least  
part, preferably all, of the wall is permeable to  
water and to components dissolved in, the container  
30 being held within a package having a moisture vapour  
transmission rate of less than  $30\text{g/m}^2/\text{day}$ .

6. A water-softening product as claimed in claim 5  
wherein at least one water-softening agent is water-  
soluble.
- 5 7. A water-softening product as claimed in claim 5 or 6  
wherein the container is a flat container, preferably  
a sachet.
8. A water-softening product as claimed in claim 7  
10 wherein the container wall comprises a sheet.
9. A water-softening product as claimed in claim 8  
wherein the sheet is a woven or non-woven material.
- 15 10. A water-softening product as claimed in any claim from  
5 to 9 wherein the packaging is formed from a sheet of  
flexible material.
11. A method of providing improved cleaning in a clothes  
20 washing machine, wherein a product containing a  
substantially water-insoluble water softening agent,  
having a wall permeable to water and to metal ions  
therein but impermeable to the agent is located in the  
machine such that hard water flows through the  
25 product, thereby effecting the softening of the water  
in the machine characterised in that the product is  
stored and removed prior to use from packaging having  
a MVTR of less than  $30\text{g/m}^2/\text{day}$ .